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DEPARTMENT FOR SRAP, SCA/FO, SCA/A, EUR/RPM  
STATE PASS USAID FOR ASIA/SCAA

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SUBJECT: NANGARHAR GOVERNOR SHERZAI: RETURN OF ACCUSED  
ASSASSIN COULD LEAD TO UNREST IN PROVINCE

Classified By: Interagency Provincial Affairs Deputy Coordinator Hoyt Yee for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

Summary

¶1. (S/NF) Nangarhar Governor Gul Agha Sherzai told Task Force Mountain Warrior Commander (TFMW CDR) and State Department Regional Representative (DOS/R) on August 3 that the return from Pakistan of Haji Zaman, implicated in the murder of former Deputy President Haji Abdul Qadir, would be a test for the "rule of law." The dispute between Zaman and Qadir's relatives could result in a "big disturbance" if not resolved quickly. He emphasized the need for outreach to the tribes of Nangarhar to promote stability, and proposed creation of a 350-member "police auxiliary" in the province. Nangarhar is prioritizing election security and will conduct security-related "clean-ups" in the coming weeks to ensure a safe election. The Province needs better electricity, roads and employment opportunities, he said, in embracing TFMW's new approach to Command Emergency Response Programs (CERP). Sherzai did not tip his hand on his post-election plans, although he said President Karzai had offered him his pick of either the Kandahar governorship or the Ministry of Interior Portfolio. End Summary.

Rule of Law: Haji Zaman's Return A Possible "Big Disturbance"

¶2. (C) On August 3, TFMW CDR COL George and DOS/R met with Nangarhar Governor Sherzai at the governor's palatial estate in Jalalabad for general introductions and a tour d'horizon of Nangarhar. The Nangarhar Police Chief and National Directorate of Security (NDS) Chief also stopped by briefly for introductions. Sherzai said the return from Pakistan of Haji Zaman, who was implicated in the murder of former Vice President Haji Abdul Qadir, will be a test for "rule of law."

Sherzai said that he had discussed the matter with President Karzai and emphasized that swift resolution was imperative for provincial stability. He urged Karzai to consult with Kabul Governor Haji al Din Mohammed, Haji Qadir's brother, then to visit Nangarhar and broker a way forward with Haji Zahir, Haji Qadir's son, for the sake of peace. Karzai thought it was a good plan. Sherzai worried that if Haji Qadir's family was not reconciled with Haji Zaman, there would be a "big disturbance" in Nangarhar between Haji Zahir's backers, Haji al Din Mohammed's Ghilzai tribal members, and Haji Zaman's Khogiyani tribal supporters. Sherzai said he has been working the issue for more than a year. Haji Din Mohammed's position, according to Sherzai, is that Haji Zaman should confess to the murder of Haji Qadir, and a Jirga should be held to decide upon the consequences.

Tribal Dynamics Key

¶3. (C) Governor Sherzai emphasized that tribes provide the key to stability and security in Nangarhar Province. He said he actively engages every tribe in his jurisdiction to bolster support for the Afghan government and noted that for

many years, hostility between "Jihadis" and local tribes had made Nangarhar nearly ungovernable. Sherzai claimed he was able to restore basic stability and security because he engaged the tribes. He added that on August 9, he would convene representatives of tribes from all 21 districts in Nangarhar to encourage them to support the elections.

Sherzai Urges Karzai to Work with Pashtuns

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¶4. (C) Sherzai said he met with President Karzai on August 1, and pressed the Afghan President to engage the Pashtun people, "to slide them closer to the Afghan government and the United States." Karzai must seek their support narco-trafficking, smuggling and other illicit activities. The Afghan state cannot hold together without Pashtun buy-in, Sherzai said.

Sherzai Proposes Police Auxiliary for Nangahar

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¶5. (C/NF) Sherzai said he had pitched to President Karzai the idea of auxiliary police force for Nangarhar to address possible Khogiyani tribal violence. Sherzai proposed forming a unit of thirty people from each district, for a total of approximately 350 policemen in all. Members would be nominated and approved by the tribes, and then have to be approved by their local District Sub-Governor. Sherzai said an unspecified "we" will pay for the force members, salaries, weapons and equipment, but emphasized that this would not be a militia. Sherzai said he had proposed this idea for Nangarhar on multiple occasions, but "the Coalition has been opposing." The Governor gave examples of how this

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strategy had been implemented successfully in the past but deflected the question of who would command the force if Sherzai left the governorship. Sherzai said he would also convene a Jirga for Khogiyani tribal leaders and the three most troubled neighboring districts to engage tribal leaders on issues of improving security and development in the province.

Sherzai Raises Civilian Casualties, Criticizes Karzai

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¶6. (C) While voicing concern over the issue of civilian casualties, Sherzai said he had recently chastised Afghan President Karzai for the President's media salvos against Coalition Forces, actions, noting that, "I told him it is fine to disagree among ourselves around the table, but not publicly." He said the Afghan people had great respect for the United States and positive views toward Americans, even though they vocally criticize bombing campaigns or civilian casualties. To mitigate the negative effects of some operations, Sherzai said, "The United States should leave a good memory here: roads, clinics, schools, and beautiful buildings. You should go after a very specific target: the bad guys." He urged the United States to "engage with the local people and get them to support your views."

Sherzai Prioritizes Election Security

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¶7. (S/NF) The Governor said he is encouraging the Nangarhar Provincial Council to develop a security plan for elections, but that security forces will conduct "clean-up" operations in the run-up to the vote. The National Directorate of Security (NDS), the Afghan National Army (ANA) and the Afghan National Police (ANP) met August 4 to decide on the provincial security plan, the Governor said, emphasizing he is confident the Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF) will perform well throughout the election period. "We need the Coalition Forces' help with the election process to ensure people can vote without fear and safely." The COL noted that Coalition Forces are coordinating with Afghan counterparts on security with an aim toward maximizing voter turn-out. The Governor will be in Nangarhar through the election. "I

can't go anywhere," he said. "This is a very delicate and important time. We all have a responsibility."

Governor Enthused About New CERP Approach

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¶ 8. (C) Sherzai responded positively to Task Force Mountain Warrior,s new approach to Commander,s Emergency Response Program (CERP) funds, in which funds would be distributed only pursuant to provincial and district government budget exercises. The Governor extolled the virtues of community participation and ownership of international assistance, noting that he wants locals as well as donors to attend provincial development council meetings. In engaging on CERP, Sherzai believes a coordination committee that would provide for every district should be created and he would present his own plan on how that might work. "A coordination committee should control everything," the Governor added, noting, "It should provide for every district. There will be a nexus between the tribes and the government. We also want Jirgas involved in the decision making."

Nangarhar Needs Electricity and Jobs

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¶ 9. (SBU) Sherzai encouraged Coalition Forces to partner with both the Afghan government and ordinary people to promote reconstruction and development. The Governor said he would be willing to lend his expertise in support of Coalition Forces whenever needed and identified Jalalabad,s poor electrical grid, ring road problems and unemployment as the most pressing economic concerns for Nangarhar. He suggested that local contractors be paid for international development contracts directly and, using local labor, that they could employ a great many more people than international companies.

By way of example, Sherzai said "Local people can get paid to crush aggregate. They will do it faster than machines! We did that at Torkham Gate and it is the best road in the province"

Sherzai Doesn,t Tip Future Plans

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¶ 10. (S/NF) Sherzai was reluctant to reveal his post-election plans. "I don,t know if I will move (from the Nangarhar governorship)," he said. "President Karzai asked me to take either the Kandahar governorship or the Minister of Interior portfolio." (Note: We received an unconfirmed report that Sherzai had opted to return as Governor to Kandahar. In

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addition, it seems likely he will shuttle back and forth to Kabul from time to time leading up to the election. End Note.)

Comment

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¶ 11. (S/NF) The Governor lived up to his reputation as a savvy political operator, casting himself as an American ally while seeking ways to further extend and consolidate his authority in Nangarhar through auxiliary police and tribal outreach. Despite his notoriety, it is encouraging that he was receptive to the pitch for a more transparent CERP allocation process, although he will likely seek to shape and define the process for his own ends. While we understand Sherzai,s limitations, the challenge will be to edge him further along the spectrum from warlord to governor. We will try to leverage his ambitions for national power and his desire for respect, both domestically and internationally, to help us guide our agenda to separate the population from the AAF, connect the people to the government, and transform Nangarhar to positive effect. End Comment.

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